

Managing Anger

Like other emotions, anger plays an important role in the way we live and grow. But unlike emotions such as happiness, sorrow or grief, anger can escalate into cruelty and violence. On the other hand, if managed, anger can be channeled into positive energy. The key is learning how to control our anger and express it constructively. This article takes a look at why we get angry and how we can learn to use our anger to produce positive results.

What Causes Anger?

Anger is triggered by several factors. The most common are our perceptions, level of tension, lifestyle and environment.

Perceptions—Often anger is our response to a negative or perceived negative situation. If we have a negative attitude, expect people to cause us harm or believe that the world is a bad place, we're likely to feel angry.

Level of Tension—Anger produces physical reactions, including muscle tension. The more tense we become, the more tired we get. The more tired we get, the more easily we become angry.

Lifestyle—The way we lead our lives can affect whether we are prone to feeling angry, and how well we deal with our anger. For example, a difficult boss, marital problems or conflicting demands can all have a dramatic impact on our emotions.

Environment—Every day we're faced with events that we don't expect or are beyond our control. For example, when you're driving a car, you can't control the drivers who cut you off or go too slowly. However, you can control how you deal with these situations by using the strategies outlined below.

How Can I Control My Anger?

Each of us has a set of conscious and unconscious rules that we expect others around us to follow. When people break these rules, we become upset. The more significant the break, the greater our anger. So what's the solution? You can learn to better manage your anger by following these four basic steps:

Acknowledging—Many people cover up their anger to avoid conflict or hurting others' feelings. The next time you get angry, don't deny the way you feel. Recognize your anger and allow yourself to believe it is a natural, normal, healthy human feeling that everyone experiences.

Exploring—What is causing your anger? Is it something someone said or the way someone treated you? Or is it a situation, such as stormy weather or traffic, that is beyond your control? Remember that others don't make you angry, you are responsible for your own feelings.



Express your anger in a healthy way — If the anger was caused by something that someone said or did, tell the person in a calm, respectful manner how you feel. If your anger was not caused by another person, verbalize it anyway, but without taking it out on others. For example, if you're caught in traffic say out loud, "This traffic makes me angry!" Let loose of the anger rather than keeping it bottled up inside.

Taking Time-Outs — If you're having trouble expressing your anger in a healthy way, remove yourself from the situation. Call a friend or relative, go for a walk, or just leave the room. This will give you an opportunity to cool down and assess the situation in a calm, rational manner.

Moving On — Don't dwell on it. Once you've verbalized your anger, let it go. Remind yourself that you've done all you could by expressing your feelings in a healthy manner.

Letting anger go once you've expressed it can be difficult. If you have trouble, try tension-reducing exercises. Practice deep muscle relaxation, take a short walk, count to 100 — whatever it takes to calm yourself down.

Effective anger management can help you have more productive disagreements, reduce stress, and even improve personal relationships. Remember, anger management doesn't mean suppressing or denying anger. Rather, it means moderating your behavior. In other words, by managing your anger, you can turn it into positive action.

Remember . . .

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How Not to Express Anger

While anger can be a normal, healthy expression of our feelings, when not properly controlled it can also escalate into rage.

Don't deny that you are angry or keep your anger inside. This will just increase stress and could lead to an outburst or temper tantrum. Similarly, avoid taking your anger out on something or someone other than what is causing it. For example, if you have a bad day at work, don't go home and yell at your family. Doing so will only prevent you from getting to the root of your anger and cause additional problems.

It's also important not to hide your anger behind sarcasm or innuendo. Don't be hurtful to others. Avoid name-calling, put-downs, threats and physical attacks. Being calm and direct is the best method.

Remember, anger is a normal, healthy emotion when expressed in a constructive and controlled manner. Go ahead and let yourself get angry. Just make sure you stay positive, open and assertive. Both you and the people around you will benefit.

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